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ABSTRACT

This manual, based on a workplace literacy project, discusses the pros and cons of using portfolios for student evaluation from a practitioner's standpoint. It also highlights the assessment tools that can aid in making learning more relevant and goal-oriented for adult learners. The manual is organized in six sections. The first section discusses what portfolios can do, and the second section explains what a portfolio is and how it can be used in adult education. The third section suggests the benefits that can accrue from using portfolios for adult learners. In the fourth section, the types of items that can be kept in a portfolio are described. The fifth section suggests methods of using portfolios in the classroom and touches upon the ethics of portfolio ownership. The final section reflects on instructor and learner evaluation of portfolios. Six appendixes provide samples of the following: learner interview form, learning style survey, individualized education plan, individualized education plan chart, student attendance log, and skill enhancement program motivation monitor. Contains 11 references. (KC)

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ED 384 778

THINKING ABOUT LEARNING

AND LEARNING ABOUT THINKING

USING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION

A Handbook for Instructors and Tutors
December, 1994

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THINKING ABOUT LEARNING AND LEARNING ABOUT THINKING USING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION

A Handbook for Instructors and Tutors

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December, 1994

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SETTING THE STAGE

> *"Assessment should be continuous, capture a rich array of what students know and can do, involve realistic contexts, communicate to students and others what is valued, portray the processes by which work is accomplished, and be integrated with instruction."*
>
> *Judith A. Arter and Vicki Spandel,*
> *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory*

CHALLENGES TO MEASURING PROGRESS

Good teaching of any kind is hard work. Instructing adults who are returning to the classroom is a special challenge. To begin with, the emotional baggage accompanying each adult learner to a first class often surpasses weight restrictions on international flights! Any instructor who has ever truly listened to and learned from adult learners knows that this baggage can include some powerful and toxic items: fear of failure (again), low self esteem, the old concepts of "teacher as all-powerful holder of knowledge" and "student as blank slate who must have something wrong with them because 'I just couldn't get it the first time'". Deeply embedded negative voices can also form part of the baggage - voices of parents or grade school teachers or peers often echoing back 10 or 20 or 30 years to say: "dummy", "stupid", or "retard".

Add to this baggage factors like wildly divergent educational levels, diverse life experiences, goals, and histories with formal education. Consider things like diversity in the classroom, different learning styles, and learning disabilities. Take into account the many responsibilities and concerns which preoccupy adults on any given day, vying for their concentration and their ability to focus on learning. Taken together, these factors require tremendous amounts of sensitivity, thinking and planning time before a teacher even enters the classroom.

Teaching and learning must take place within this context for instructors and students alike, and so must the assessment of teaching and learning. The acts of capturing the progress of each learner toward their goals, and assessing the effectiveness of teaching are, both, an art in and of themselves. For many years, researchers, instructors, program administrators, and departments of education have sought to capture and quantify and document exactly what occurs in the adult education classroom. It is a challenge equal to that of teaching, and as with teaching, has shown varied success.

Standardized testing of adult learners is usually modeled after that of primary and secondary education. It has been based on comparing an adult learner's progress to that of young people at different years in formal education, or to other adults in classrooms across the country. For most instructors and learners, standardized testing is a frustrating experience; test results often fall far short of portraying good teaching or diligent learning. Disillusionment with the results of standardized testing - in the face of the specific challenges posed by teaching adult learners - has led to the development of many alternatives.

Competency-based assessment, such as the MAPP/CASAS system used in Maryland, has begun to replace standardized testing in many adult education programs. This approach attempts to break down adults' learning into component tasks in broad skill areas such as work place, civic, or consumer skills. Competency in these areas is measured before and after instruction. Competency-based assessment is definitely a big leap in the direction of tailoring assessment to real life situations and to learning. The Class Profile charts on which incorrect answers can be plotted for a class are especially helpful to instructors in determining where to begin teaching any given learner in a given skill area. This information can then be used in grouping learners by ability levels and in lesson planning.

However, competency-based assessment is still a "pre" and "post" model; it cannot capture learning, or thinking or teaching as *processes that have occurred over time* in small incremental steps. It is like reading only the beginning and the end of a novel without knowing what happened in between - or how, or why. It tells an instructor little about the effectiveness of specific teaching methods.

Increasingly, all the players involved in adult education, from learners to program administrators, want to know more about the *process* of teaching and learning. We want to understand what contributes to it, how it happens, and how it can inform programs to ensure that adult learners are getting the best education possible. Moreover, we want to see for ourselves and help learners see the painstaking incremental steps of progress that occur between "pre" and "post". It is important to know how a learner travelled from Point A to Point B, both for the learner's sake and their instructor's as well.

Why bother? We are interested because we know that the ability to reflect on one's own learning, and to see constant progress - however incremental - is the key to motivating adult learners. *Learners who are not motivated will not be learners for long*. Learners who cannot see their progress from class to class will, sooner than later, stop attending. It's that simple. In the same vein, an instructor who watches the size of their

class dwindle from twenty to seven over a six week period will begin to wonder at some point what they are doing wrong. A program administrator concerned about cost effectiveness of their program will question why class sizes are dwindling so quickly.

WHAT PORTFOLIOS CAN DO

Portfolio assessment of learner progress is a powerful and deceptively simple tool for turning this negative cycle into a positive one. It embraces the common sense principle that the best way for a learner to note their own progress - and stay motivated - is to be able *to see it, to understand why it happens, and to value it*. Portfolios turn instructors and learners alike into detectives who investigate - together - all the facts missing from the middle of the story. Portfolios are records of the high points between the first chapter and the last. Learners who begin to reflect on their own learning will be able to free themselves, piece by piece, of their emotional baggage; the blocks to learning which have held so many people down for so very long.

How does this happen? Each piece of portfolio evidence found and analyzed points to that mysterious and elusive character called "progress" or "the learning process". Each piece brings with it the excitement, motivation, and the curiosity to continue the search for more evidence of good teaching and diligent learning. Most importantly, in the realization and celebration of small successes lies the impetus to continue that good, hard work: an instructor's constant improvement of learner-centered teaching techniques, and a student's journey toward becoming a confident, self-motivated and life-long learner.

This handbook is aimed at aiding you, the instructor in understanding what portfolio assessment is all about: how to use it; what's in it for you; what's in it for your learners; and most importantly, how it can benefit all aspects of adult education without requiring large amounts of time to put into practice. Done well, portfolio assessment can aid in addressing all the challenges described earlier; it embraces those enormous issues of emotional baggage, different learning styles, the need to work on individualized learning for diverse goals and people.

Throughout this manual, the term "instructor" or "teacher" is used. However, one-on-one literacy tutors will find portfolio assessment equally useful with adult beginning readers. Indeed, this population is perhaps most in need of seeing and noting small steps of progress because it comes so slowly at the onset of learning to read. Although a few of the activities discussed for small and large groups will not apply to tutoring, the lion's share of material on portfolio assessment will be equally helpful to tutors and instructors of classes.

While this handbook is written for instructors, it is hoped that program administrators will also find it a useful tool for understanding the challenges which adult educators and learners face, and the ways in which portfolio assessment can aid in addressing those challenges.

PORTFOLIOS FOR ADULT EDUCATION: DEMYSTIFYING THE CONCEPT

There is a great deal of educational research on portfolio assessment to be found these days. Much of it, though, is written for the elementary and secondary school setting. An adult education instructor wishing to use portfolio assessment in their classroom must first translate most research articles from one setting and one population to another. This handbook enables you to watch the movie without having to read the subtitles! It is based on years of experience with adult learners in workplace literacy and adult basic education settings. It is also based on the knowledge that, just as no two people are alike, no two classrooms are alike.

As an instructor, you and your adult learners will be the experts in using portfolio assessment to measure the learning and the teaching that take place in *your* classroom. As you become familiar with the basic concepts and methods involved, you will be able to tailor them to your own needs and that of your learners. One of the best, most promising aspects of using portfolio assessment is that it is open ended and can be crafted to specific needs, settings and groups of people. It can be used equally effectively in workplace literacy and adult basic education programs, and with the tutoring of adult beginning readers. With modification and creativity, portfolios can also be utilized with ESOL classes and special populations.

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

A portfolio, simply put, is a chosen collection of student work; evidence of the learning that has taken place toward reaching specific goals, and the teaching that has helped a person reach those goals. A portfolio - be it a binder, a folder or a notebook - contains samples of an adult learner's work, consistently stored there over time, which shows the progress that has been made during their stay in a class. A portfolio is a tangible *product*. The act of compiling one over time is an educational and empowering *process* shared by an instructor and a student that is, in and of itself, a powerful motivator and mode of learning.

One of the most straightforward definitions of portfolio assessment which this author has encountered comes from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. It describes portfolios in terms of both product and process: "... a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). This collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines for selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection."

ARE LEARNER PORTFOLIOS LIKE ARTISTS' PORTFOLIOS?

Portfolios for education are often described using the analogy of an artist's or a photographer's portfolio. While this is somewhat true in that artists choose the best samples of their work and store them in a portfolio as adult learners do, there is an important difference between the two types. An artist is constantly *replacing* items in a portfolio with new, and what they judge to be their *best work*, as they progress in mastery of a particular medium. Chances are, the watercolor of the seascape finished three years ago will be replaced at some point with the watercolor completed more recently which portrays improved technique. This is not exactly the case with portfolios for adult learning.

What we are striving for in using portfolios in adult education is a learner's choice of work samples which best portray the steps in the process of mastering a particular skill, and which show reflection about the process. To continue the art analogy, an adult learner doesn't *replace* earlier items with more recent ones so that only their best work in different skill areas is displayed. Rather, the learner keeps not only the first and last "watercolor", but several in between to show the incremental progress that has been made in technique or, in our case, learning a skill.

We want to leave behind that trail of evidence between Point A and Point B. This evidence enables instructors and learners to think about and reflect on the process of learning: what has been mastered, where the difficulties lie, what next steps or short term goals should be set. In this way, the process of learning and teaching is demystified. It becomes more concrete, tangible and accessible to learners. We can still compare "pre" skills with "post" skills, but we can also see progress - and stay motivated to keep learning and teaching - along the way.

> *"I was reminded that I don't need to feel pressure in putting together portfolios; that each piece put in a portfolio need not be a completed work of art but a stepping stone along the way."*
>
> *J.K., Instructor, Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program*

CUTTING THROUGH THE JARGON: PORTFOLIOS AND ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

There are some important but rather dry-sounding buzzwords currently in use in adult education, and related to portfolios. They include "alternative assessment methods", "authentic assessment" and "performance assessment". Somehow, they conjure up an avalanche of paperwork burying a poor unsuspecting instructor and her students as they climb Skill Mountain! In reality, the phrases are deceiving in their lack of liveliness. What they can mean for you and your students are simply alternatives to standardized testing. They refer to ways of capturing learning gains; specifically, ways which have real application to a learner's life and goals.

Here, in one sentence, is how the buzzwords relate to one another: portfolios are an alternative assessment tool which measures performance of authentic or "real life" tasks. The process of compiling and evaluating portfolios, the specific items within them, and the body of work as a whole are all alternatives to using standardized or competency-based tests as pre and post measurements of learning gains. They are intimately linked to instruction because, in using them, learners acquire important critical thinking, organizational, and communication skills; instructors gain more insight into the way in which students learn. Portfolios paint the whole process that has taken place for any given learner and his instructor.

BECOMING ONE'S OWN YARDSTICK

Implied in this definition of portfolios and alternative assessment tools is another important common sense notion. Given the tremendous differences between any two adults - much less ten or twenty or a nation of them - it makes sense that progress is not measured by comparing people to other people or to a standard that has been set. It is far more accurate and illustrative to assess a person's skills at different points in time along a continuum of working toward their expressed goals.

Any seasoned adult instructor knows how devastating the impact of comparison and competition has been for most adult learners during their formal education - even if it occurred 40 years ago, in the sixth grade, just before an individual dropped out of school. Many adult learners can still quote darn-near verbatim an elementary school teacher who said things like: "Why can't you get it like Frankie can?", or "Everyone else seems to be understanding this; if you'd only put your thinking cap on, you could catch up to the rest". Standardized testing reinforces this sense of comparison by measuring a student against a standard, or against their peers in class rather than showing the progress that they, as an individual, have made.

Portfolio assessment, on the other hand, is an important way to help adult learners take charge of their own educational process by realizing that they alone are their own yardstick of measurement. After all, how can you compare Juanita's progress with James' on learning unit pricing if Juanita began with all the necessary computational skills and James had to start with long division first? It simply cannot be done. In using portfolios to assess progress, an instructor can focus teaching where it belongs: on a particular learner with her particular set of strengths, challenges, goals, and style of learning.

Thought of another way, performance assessment using portfolios is a vertical measurement of a person's growth in learning, whereas traditional methods of standardized testing portray a sweeping horizontal picture of a set of skills possessed by one person and compared to a linear lineup of people across a class, a state or a country. Just as the term horizontal implies surface or superficial, the term vertical implies depth. In the process of learning how to become one's own yardstick or evaluator, adult learners are delving into themselves. They are thinking about their learning and learning about the ways in which they think. This concept will be explored in greater detail in the section "Portfolio Assessment: Benefits for Adult Learners".

For now, take with you the notion that portfolio assessment is what you and your learners will make of it together as you engage in the fine arts of teaching and learning.

USING PORTFOLIOS FOR ADULT LEARNING: WHAT THEY CAN DO

The title of this handbook, Thinking About Learning and Learning About Thinking is a simple description of the most powerful phenomenon which takes place when portfolios are used well. The technical term for it is metacognition. Webster defines cognition as: "the act or faculty of knowing" and "the product of this act, a perception or insight". Added to this, the prefix "meta" or "beyond the usual" implies more or better knowing. Metacognition, or literally, thinking about one's thought process, is a higher order thinking skill which is found, used and developed through the use of portfolios. What's even better, adult learners take their instructors along with them on this journey of knowing. When metacognition actively takes place in the classroom, everyone benefits.

BENEFITS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

> *"The students are taking responsibility for filling out portfolio entries, assessing their own progress and re-evaluating their goals when necessary."*
>
> *M.G., Instructor, Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program*

This simple quote contains much extremely positive and revealing information. The ability to assess their own progress and re-evaluate their goals for learning reveals that the students in this class were actively engaging in the process of metacognition. They were thinking about the skills which they had learned, considering how much progress they were making, or how quickly they were making it, and they were adjusting their goals accordingly. By re-evaluating goals "as necessary", we know that learners in this instructor's class had to have been thinking about their own thinking and learning processes. We can also gather that goals were being re-evaluated for a purpose; perhaps with learners' jobs or family demands in mind, their personal or career paths.

In order to do these things, learners need a vehicle, something tangible, something that can be looked at and given consideration. This vehicle is the portfolio process: the entries and items which they contain, the guidelines for choosing items and the criteria with which they'll be judged. Portfolios enable learners to step back from the painstaking and often frustrating process of learning, and to think about that process: how it feels to them, what they are accomplishing, and where they are headed. In stepping back to look at these things, one is able to "come up for air" and take a look at the wider picture or

context of learning; to see where one fits in. *If an individual is thinking about their own thought process and progress, it follows that they are learning how to learn.*

PORTFOLIOS, EMPOWERMENT AND MOTIVATION GO HAND IN HAND

This idea is connected to the other major benefits of using portfolios with adult learners: empowerment and motivation. "Empowerment" has been so over-used lately, that it needs defining in this context. A feeling of empowerment is a feeling that one is capable of taking charge and making positive changes in one's life. It is the knowledge that one has choices in life, and that learning can enhance those choices. It implies having the self confidence needed to act when one feels compelled to act based on what one knows. Aiding people to feel empowered is, in a sense, the highest goal of adult education: learning for the purpose of advancing or improving one's self, one's life and the sense of possibility about one's future.

Both empowerment and motivation carry with them a sense of responsibility toward choices that need to be made, learning that needs to occur and changes that can potentially take place. And yes, these lofty concepts begin with "little" concrete things like having a math concept finally click in, or finishing the final draft of a business letter knowing it is articulate and without errors. It is the ability to explain to a teacher why one piece of writing was chosen over others. Portfolios help learners to realize that they are not only capable of mastering a new skill, but also of understanding exactly how they got there, how they surmounted difficulties along the way. Gradually, learners realize that thinking skills or tools for learning can be applied to the next concepts, and, like any other skills, can be built upon and developed over time.

When an individual is aware of their own process of thinking and learning; when *how* one learns is no longer a mystery, then any individual accomplishment like mastering decimal fractions or filling out tax forms becomes something larger than itself. *It carries with it the realization that one is capable of learning, and symbolizes one's ability to master the next thing.* It fosters the making of connections between skills and career goals. It makes learning exciting, possible and one's own.

A teacher involved in the Portfolio Assessment Project at Essex Community College put it this way:

> *"Students feel and see their academic, personal and career goals advanced; they are more aware of growth and the need for more "Growth" in their lives. They enjoy learning and are not so afraid of change."* - M.H.

BENEFITS FOR INSTRUCTORS

What are the benefits to you, the instructor, in using portfolios? They are as rich and varied as those for the adult learners in your classes. Teaching excited, motivated students is simply more enjoyable! Portfolios can help create a powerful atmosphere of shared learning and teaching. This exchange cannot help but assist in improving the quality of your teaching.

Any time that students take active responsibility for their own learning, the roles within a classroom shift perceptibly. It becomes easier and more natural to answer a question with another question which challenges a learner to think about how they might approach solving a problem. It becomes easier to encourage peer teaching. As a learner learns to become their own yardstick, their instructor is freed up to become more of a "job coach" and a designer of experiences which enable learning to take place in an exciting and enjoyable way.

The use of portfolios can significantly change the quality of communication within a classroom over time. Instructors often comment on a refreshing atmosphere of equals which grows gradually. Learners and instructors are all more equally engaged in teaching and learning simultaneously. The kind of communication engendered by using alternative assessment techniques ultimately helps you, the instructor, understand adult learners more intimately. The guessing game of why learners get so "stuck" on certain concepts (or so quiet, or...) slowly evaporates in the face of active, positive communication grounded in the realization for learners that they have both the right and the responsibility to speak about their learning.

What follows from more and better communication in a classroom is better teaching. As you begin using portfolios and feeling comfortable with the process, you'll begin to view each class as a powerful learning experience for yourself. You will more clearly understand why certain methods and activities work well and others do not. The more depth there is to your perception of each individual learner, the more depth there will be to your teaching.

BENEFITS FOR PROGRAMS AND ADMINISTRATORS

> *"Students who were with me for the second time have been able to sit with other students and give help. They are taking more initiative in leading others and are writing more often and with greater ease. First time students have gained confidence in their abilities each time they view portfolios and see how much they can accomplish. Those students in both groups who have been able to attend regularly and who have been consistent in their efforts, have been more successful, showing improvement in the quality of their work."*
>
> *M.P., Instructor, Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program*

"Students who were with me for a second time. . . " sounds like retention heaven! This quote reveals the accomplishment of several major goals of adult education programs (and a dream of program coordinators!) It speaks to a thoughtful and excellent instructor, to motivated students who are able to see their own progress, and to learner satisfaction with the instructor. It also illustrates the instructor's understanding of the role that portfolio assessment played in encouraging adult learners to do the above things.

The quote also reveals that the term "portfolio assessment" does not fully capture what portfolios can do. They are not simply an assessment tool. Portfolios are a method for teaching metacognitive skills. Portfolios are a staff development tool in and of themselves, because they aid instructors in reflecting on and improving their teaching. They aid in retaining learners because they help to motivate and empower them. All of these factors are powerful pluses when it comes to program development in the long term.

WHAT KIND OF THINGS ARE KEPT IN A PORTFOLIO?

In this section, we'll look at some guidelines for considering what types of items should be placed in learner portfolios, and where these items come from. This includes some considerations that you, as an instructor, will want to take into account in planning a class and setting up portfolios in your classroom. The guidelines will also address some of the "standard" items that program administrators might also require based on methods used for evaluating portfolios within the context of specific workplace literacy or adult education programs.

HOW PORTFOLIOS DIFFER FROM STUDENT WORK FOLDERS

One of the major sources of confusion among instructors is the difference between portfolios and student work folders, used by many adult education instructors. To begin with, there <u>is</u> a difference between the two; they are not interchangeable terms referring to the same thing. Portfolios and student work folders can complement each other, however, and can be used in tandem to facilitate the processes of learning about thinking and thinking about learning. <u>Completed work stored in a work folder is the main source of possible items that learners can draw upon for their portfolios.</u> If you are planning to use portfolios, plan to use student work folders.

For the sake of definition, a student work folder is a folder in which an instructor places independent work assignments for an adult learner, based on that individual's specific interests and goals for learning. They can also be the repository for all completed student work. Work folders are also very helpful tools to instructors for working around the "one room school house" phenomena present in almost every adult education classroom.

Each person in a class works at a different pace; a group of ten learners will finish a group assignment at different times. In waiting for the last learners to finish the assignment, there is potentially "dead time" in the classroom. The challenge for lesson planning to avoid "dead time" is solved by enabling those who finish earlier to begin work that is meaningful to them found in their work folder. This aids an instructor in maximizing time, takes the pressure off of learners who require more time than others, and creates a classroom environment in which everyone works at their own pace. Work folder assignments may be completed in class, begun in class and finished at home, or, can be taken home as an extra assignment - similar to the concept of "extra credit assignments" in formal education.

Warning! Work folder assignments have nothing whatsoever to do with the dreadful notion of "busywork" which most of us recall from our elementary school days! *Meaningful* assignments in a student work folder are those which an instructor has chosen because they address a specific skill area - or perhaps an area of interest unrelated to class content - in which an individual learner has expressed interest. Work folder items can also be more advanced, in-depth problems that build upon a group activity. Assignments can also provide extra work for reinforcement of a particular area which a learner has found difficult to master. Items should never simply be "things to keep people busy"!

In order to implement work folders well, an instructor must be committed to providing feedback on completed tasks in a work folder, whether verbally or in writing. If a learner invests the time in the work, it must receive a thoughtful response. Based on learner feedback as to which work folder assignments they particularly enjoyed or found helpful, and on instructor monitoring of completed work folder assignments, the instructor replenishes assignments so that there is always work in each learner's folder to be completed. Ideally, a work folder should always include several items so that a learner has a choice. Lastly, completed assignments should be kept in the folder so that a learner can refer back to them, and so that the folder grows over time with completed work. Learners will then choose from work folder items as well as other sources like journals, to compile their portfolios.

Before turning to the content of portfolios, we'll end this description of student work folders with a detailed, concrete example of how to set them up and use them. You'll also see how work folders and portfolios complement each other.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR IMPLEMENTING PORTFOLIOS: AN EXAMPLE

Marla is a workplace literacy instructor with a class of fifteen hospital employees. Although the class was designated as GED level and above, scheduling constraints for learners necessitated combining a class of four learners at the ABE level with eleven students who are either working toward their GED or already have a high school diploma. The ABE level learners are cafeteria workers; the GED level learners are lab assistants and clerical workers. Needless to say, Marla felt overwhelmed at the beginning of the cycle with lesson planning that could address the educational needs of all of her students. Wisely, she decided to use work folders and portfolio assessment from the onset.

Marla began by reviewing the Individualized Education Plans for each learner. She found them helpful in painting a broad

picture of learners' goals, but lacking in detailed information about areas of individual interest. Marla created a simple, one page Needs Assessment to be completed by the learners on the first day of class after a discussion on class goals for the semester. She suspected that some learners would need help in writing their own answers to the questions. (Note that many examples of needs assessments exist; the one that follows is a sample.) The needs assessment contained the following questions, with plenty of space between each for written answers:

Sample Needs Assessment

1. What brought you to this class? Why are you here right now?

2. By the end of this class, what things would you like to have learned or accomplished? Be as specific as possible.

3. Describe daily job tasks that depend on reading, math and writing.

4. Which of these job tasks are difficult for you? Which would you like to improve in class?

5. Are there any other areas of your job with which you are not comfortable or confident? Would you like to work on these during the semester?

6. What would you like to be doing 5 years from now with your work or education?

7. In what ways do you think you learn best? By reading? Hearing something explained? Watching someone do something? Doing it yourself? (Note that this question was used in lieu of a more in-depth learning style checklist.)

8. Are there things which might make it difficult for you to attend class regularly? If so, how can we work around this?

Compiled and adapted for this handbook by the author from several forms used by the Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program administered by Essex Community College. Original sources include the Labor Education Achievement Program (LEAP) and the Instructional Frameworks program of the Maryland State Department of Education.

On the first day of class, Marla facilitated a group discussion on goals for the cycle. The discussion provided the opportunity for learners to share their expectations of themselves and the class. In the process, several important things were accomplished: learners were able to "break the ice"; they began to get to know each other, and to feel comfortable in the group setting. Many shared areas of their work which caused them frustration or confusion, and, in the process, learned that others shared similar concerns across job descriptions. This was a relief to the ABE level students who entered the class afraid that co-workers would discover that they lacked some very basic skills.

Marla seized the moment to speak about the fact that each person is different, learns differently, and has strengths and weaknesses in different areas. She acknowledged that it is natural to feel "rusty" if skills haven't been used in a long time. She explained that each student was going to learn about how they best learn. Marla expressed her hope that students would help each other learn, explaining that the act of teaching another person always reinforces the skill of the "teacher". She ended the discussion by saying that she viewed the class - herself included -as a room full of 16 students and 16 teachers.

Marla then used specific points from the discussion to explain her teaching style and goals for the class. She said that she wanted to both encourage group learning and provide time for work on individual goals. Marla explained how the Needs Assessment could help do that by providing information for preparing workfolders and planning the class around specific needs and interests. She asked learners to be as specific as possible when filling it out. Marla noticed nervous looks from the ABE level students, which confirmed her suspicion that they were afraid of having to understand a written form and to write responses to it. She asked for a volunteer who read through the questions orally, and then explained that she would be roving around to help anyone who "got stuck" in writing. The looks of concern on the faces of the ABE learners softened somewhat.

Before the next class, Marla reviewed the completed needs assessments. She sometimes referred back to the Class Profile form (which shows incorrect answers on the MAPP/CASAS assessment) to gain a more complete picture of individual's skills. She made the following observations, and planned lessons and work folder assignments based on her observations:

OBSERVATION #1

Five of the students were interested in resume writing.

PLANNING BASED ON OBSERVATION #1

Marla copied some appropriate materials on the topic for their work folders, and also decided to do some small group work on resumes later in the semester.

OBSERVATION #2

Eight students cited decimal fractions as problematic, and an issue of concern because they worked in the lab.

PLANNING BASED ON OBSERVATION #2

By looking at the CASAS Class Profile for these learners, she found that some of them would need review of multiplication and division skills before beginning decimal fractions. Marla used her information to divide the class into various math levels, and to find appropriate math workbooks for each learner. She knew from this that she would have to divide the class into three ability levels for math.

OBSERVATION #3

Marla realized that the completed Needs Assessments had served an unexpected purpose: they were actually a first writing sample! By looking at the language, grammar and structure of the written responses, Marla saw a wide range of writing skills. All of the ABE level learners and three of the GED level learners were in need of some basic language skills for writing, such as subject - verb agreement, use of punctuation and capitalization, and spelling. Three quarters of these learners mentioned the need to improve their writing for job related tasks.

PLANNING BASED ON OBSERVATION #3

Marla decided that a twenty minute portion of each class would be devoted to writing about the workplace, and that learners would have to be grouped because of the varied skill levels. She decided that first drafts of writing would be placed in each learner's work folder with comments for revision, so that as learners had time, they could work on revising their drafts. Marla also chose to copy some specific exercises on basic grammar for the work folders of learners having the most difficulty.

OBSERVATION #4

Marla was surprised to see that, regardless of job title or skill level, most learners wrote about a lack of self-confidence in dealing with their supervisors, asking questions about work-related matters, and understanding written forms at work regarding issues such as health benefits and notices about new procedures.

PLANNING BASED ON OBSERVATION #4

Marla decided to institute a weekly Work Forum - a one hour period each week in which individuals or groups of learners would present an issue from the workplace for guided peer discussion on how to deal with the situation. She chose some hand outs and work sheets on basic communication and problem solving skills for inclusion in work folders, and planned an introductory discussion on communication in the workplace for the following week. She also began to think about ways in which learners could write essays or journal entries to reflect on the Work Forum discussions, knowing that some of this writing would be included in their portfolios.

LEARNING FROM THE EXAMPLE

The above example illustrated several important elements of learner-centered teaching, planning and alternative assessment techniques, as well as some of the tools and practices used for implementing them in the classroom:

- The relationship between assessing needs and designing class structure, lesson planning, using work folders and later assessing learner progress using portfolios.
- The use of work folders to provide learners with specific, meaningful work based on their goals and interests.
- The use of class discussion, needs assessments and other information-gathering methods to determine needs, interests, and concerns.
- Strategies for setting an empowering, learner-centered tone at the beginning of a class, which is a precursor to several important things:
  - motivating and encouraging students
  - placing responsibility for learning in the hands of learners
  - informing learners of the two-way expectations that exist in the class between and among learners and instructor.
  - setting the stage for the dynamics which will permit an active, motivated use of portfolio assessment for gauging student's individual learning.

Lastly, this example illustrates a key point in underscoring the difference between learner work folders and portfolios: a work folder, by containing most of the learners' work over a period of time, is the main source from which to choose portfolio items. Others sources may included journals, tape recordings, videotapes photographs and the like.

The following section describes sample items for placement in a portfolio, and discusses some general guidelines to help you and your learners weed out the useful and appropriate from the contrary. This list shows possible items for portfolios together with an explanation of why they were chosen. At the end of the section, we'll extract some general criteria or guidelines that will be helpful in explaining and discussing the use of portfolios with your students.

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING PORTFOLIO ITEMS WITH SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE ITEMS

At the beginning of a cycle, instructors and their students should discuss, craft and use their own guidelines for choosing items that will be placed in learner portfolios. Crafting guidelines is part of the learning process; it is a step toward developing ownership of both the process and the product of portfolio assessment. The specific guidelines will depend upon the type and level of a class, content areas, program reporting requirements and learner and instructor needs. While programs and classes will dictate specific guidelines, the following are offered to stimulate your thinking:

1. Forms which assess learners and structure learning;
2. Items which reflect the process of mastering skills, and the progress achieved over time;
3. Items which reflect thinking about learning and learning about thinking; and
4. Items which learners feel strongly about including.

Each of these guidelines are discussed at length below, and are followed by specific examples of appropriate items.

GUIDELINE 1: FORMS WHICH ASSESS LEARNERS AND STRUCTURE LEARNING

Items which enable you and your learners to structure and plan their learning during a semester may be included. They will be of use later, in summarizing what has been accomplished. In addition, items which assist you in assessing learners' skills, strengths, challenges, goals, needs, interests and styles of learning may be included. They will be particularly helpful if administered at the onset and at the end of a semester to show what has been accomplished. Any of the following items may also be useful to or required by the administrator of your program because to aid in gathering data mandated by adult education funding sources. (Note: these items can also be stored elsewhere if a program requires it, or if you feel that they should not be kept in portfolios.)

GUIDELINE 1: SPECIFIC PORTFOLIO EXAMPLES

LEARNER INTERVIEW/INTAKE FORMS (See Appendix One)

MAPP/CASAS FORMS
These may include Class Profile forms or Interest Surveys.

ANY OTHER ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS
These may be required by the program, or may be developed by instructors as they become necessary and useful.

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND INTEREST SURVEYS OR INVENTORIES

LEARNING STYLE ASSESSMENTS OR CHECKLISTS (See Appendix Two)

SELF-ASSESSMENT INVENTORIES
Some programs require these and have designed their own for the use of instructors. Other programs do not, but individual instructors might find them helpful for lesson planning. Many examples exist in the adult education field. Some capture a learner's view of their own skills, while others reveal motivation for or attitudes about learning.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS (See Appendix Three)
Often called IEP's, these may be completed with learners by program staff other than instructors prior to the beginning of a semester, or may be completed with learners by the instructor as close to the beginning of the cycle.

LESSON PLAN FORMS (See Appendix Four)
Most often, these tend to be created by the instructor; however, some instructors ask learners to use the last ten minutes of class to reflect on the day's accomplishments and to write it out in a lesson plan format.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS (See Appendix Five)
Most programs require instructors to keep class attendance records for reporting purposes. Some of the instructors in the Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program used individual learner attendance forms which were attached to each learner's portfolio. The form enables a learner to sign their name and write the date of each class they attended. Instructors using this form have noted that it is a simple but significant motivational tool for learners, enabling them to monitor their own attendance. (Keep in mind that for many adult beginning readers and ESOL students, the simple act of signing one's name and recording the date may be significant and empowering accomplishments in and of themselves.)
MOTIVATION ASSESSMENTS (See Appendix Six)
SKILLS LADDERS Skills ladders for beginning readers, such as the Baltimore Reads Skills Ladder or those accompanying curriculum for special populations like the developmentally disabled should be kept in portfolios and updated periodically. Beginning ESOL instructors may want to include checklists of verbal skills mastered by their learners.

GUIDELINE 2: ITEMS WHICH SHOW THE PROCESS OF MASTERING SKILLS, AND THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED OVER TIME

Learning is a process, not a final product. You are likely to encounter tendencies among some learners to choose "only the best I can do" for their portfolio. (This is natural, and for many

learners is related to the "residue" of formal schooling which by and large was more "product" than "process" oriented.) Your job, as coach and mentor, is to remind students that their portfolios should contain some key examples of the "in between" work that shows how they arrived at "the best I can do right now" in each of the skill areas covered in class.

GUIDELINE 2: SPECIFIC PORTFOLIO EXAMPLES

For mathematics: End-of-unit or chapter reviews from math work books, completed during the course of the class, can show progress in math over time *in a summarized fashion*. By contrast, twenty-five math work sheets showing endless multiplication problems are not useful; it is more appropriate to store these in a work folder or student binder. If computers are used in math teaching, sample printouts of completed work, or the "score sheets" that some programs generate may be included in a portfolio.

For writing: Excerpts from class journals may be chosen to illuminate a learners' thinking about their progress in different skill areas. Drafts of specific writing assignments will show progress in writing as a skill itself. Computer aided writing may be included. As with the math example, do not include every work sheet or writing sample on every assigned topic; similarly, an entire journal need not be included in a portfolio. The goal here is for learners to become discriminating, to make choices about which things to include based on the guidelines or criteria which you have crafted together.

For content-specific skills: (Content-specific skills include such things as skills for the workplace eg. health, job benefits and responsibilities or on-the-job communication. Consumer skills include crafting a household budget, doing taxes, or understanding credit card bills.) Choosing portfolio items to illustrate progress toward content-specific skills may include a completed household budget; an essay on communication skills which a learner has written after class discussions and activities to address this skill; or peer comments written after a role play exercise on "Dealing with your Boss".

For reading and comprehension skills: Lists of books, articles or handouts which have been read by a learner with the date of completion can be included in a portfolio. Written responses to what has been read are even more revealing: book reports, essays or reflections on the reading, or excerpts from journals or reading response journals.

For verbal and motor skills: Instructors working with beginning ESOL students or developmentally disabled are faced with the challenge of finding "artifacts" to include in portfolios, given a lack of written work in these classes. However, these

in these classes. However, these types of learners need as much if not more feedback and evidence of their progress than others. For these instructors, the question of what to include in portfolios is the same as the question of how progress is measured in general. Any type of outline, checklist, ladder of skills or anecdotal information may be included here, even if it is maintained by the instructor.

GUIDELINE 3: ITEMS WHICH REFLECT THINKING ABOUT LEARNING AND LEARNING ABOUT THINKING

Entries should be included which illustrate how a learner has been thinking about their own learning or progress in the class; feelings and reflections about the class itself, about their job and employment prospects, goal setting for the future in light of what has been accomplished in class, etc. Items of this type also serve the dual purpose of giving you, the instructor important feedback from learners about the class itself and your teaching methods. This feedback can be used in lesson planning, modifying plans and experimenting with new techniques.

Written feedback from you, the instructor, which shares your reflections on learner progress in the broadest sense can, and where time permits, should be included in portfolios. Positive feedback and constructive comments for improvement will serve the dual purpose of documenting these specific areas over time, and of motivating learners to continue. Recognition and positive reinforcement are basic human needs; they will go a long way in keeping people excited about learning.

GUIDELINE 3: SPECIFIC PORTFOLIO EXAMPLES

If not required by your program, it is worth the time to periodically ask learners for feedback about the class and for reflection on their own progress. This can be accomplished by facilitating a discussion and taking notes or tape recording or videotaping it; by asking learners to do a specific writing assignment; or by encouraging learners to devote journal entries to these themes. Writing response sheets or reading response sheets can be used; they are simple questionnaires which encourage critical thinking about writing and reading. Examples are provided in the next section.

Learners will become increasingly more motivated to engage in this kind of reflection if you make it clear that you will respond to it in some way - either verbally or by written responses in journals or on writing assignments. Examples of ways to provide ongoing feedback for learners include:

-- Weekly, bi-weekly or monthly paragraphs describing learner progress. Instructors sometimes choose a "companion paragraph"

simple to the elaborate; however, the basic concept is that both the learner and the instructor write a brief paragraph about progress at regularly scheduled intervals determined when a cycle begins.

-- Many instructors choose to write a summary of learner progress at the end of the cycle. These should definitely be included in the portfolio. Remember that any suggestion for improvement should be accompanied by positive reinforcement of a learner strength.

-- Instructors who use journals in their classes have a built in mechanism for a back and forth dialogue with students on their progress. Excerpts from journals can be chosen for portfolios throughout the duration of a class by both learners and instructors.

-- A few sentences written by the instructor on specific assignments which merit feedback or constructive comment - even math assignments - are always appreciated by learners. A learner or instructor may choose to include this in a portfolio.

-- Checklists or student rating sheets with numbered scales on which learners rate weekly or monthly progress in different areas are simple and time efficient. They also provide a balance with lengthier, more time consuming written evaluations.

GUIDELINE 4: ITEMS WHICH LEARNERS FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT INCLUDING

If a learner feels strongly about putting a particular item in a portfolio, by all means, it should live there! We will talk later about portfolio reviews by instructors and learners, but for now, if you as an instructor feel confident that learners understand the purpose and use of portfolios, then any item they wish to include should be included. Ultimately, *it is their portfolio and their choice.*

Keep in mind, too, that learners will not always feel comfortable or be able to verbally articulate to you why they want something included. In some cases, they may have very private and personal reasons for doing so which you might never suspect. It is particularly helpful to keep in mind when working with ESOL or beginning reading level learners that many of the simple activities in class might be important "firsts" for them. Learners might not want to reveal that fact out of embarrassment. It should go without saying that there can be some unsolved mysteries for you as an instructor. In these cases, it is simply a sign of respect for the learner that you honor their choice.

GUIDELINE 4: SPECIFIC PORTFOLIO EXAMPLES

Although it has been mentioned that all work sheets from routine class assignments need not be included in a portfolio, specific work sheets of which a learner is particularly proud should go in -- perhaps because it marked a breakthrough point for them in learning a particular operation, or because it received 100% or a particularly glowing comment from you. Similarly, a church bulletin listing a learner's name may seem at first glance totally unrelated to class. In questioning a learner as to what it represents to them, you may be surprised to hear that it marked the first time they ever volunteered or read aloud in public; that being in your class gave them the self confidence to step forward. There can be no more "authentic" yardstick of one's progress.

PORTFOLIOS IN THE CLASSROOM:
THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF HOW TO USE THEM

This section covers some of the practical issues involved in actually implementing portfolios in your classroom. It is written with the knowledge that a sad reality of adult education in the U.S. is the fact that few programs are able to adequately compensate instructors for preparation time, curriculum development time, the time it takes to truly individualize instruction so that all learners' needs are met, or the time to develop new methods such as portfolios. With this in mind, the methods described here for implementing portfolios in the classroom are written with an eye toward time management for instructors.

WHO CHOOSES WHAT GOES IN A PORTFOLIO?

There is a two-part answer to this question:

1) The adult learners choose the things which they have created over the course of the cycle which they feel represent their work and their progress. They are choosing based on the guidelines you have established together at the beginning of the semester.

2) The instructor may include those items mandated by their program, as well as other methods they deem helpful for collecting data and reporting results at the end of the semester. In addition to required forms, you may wish to include items which represent written feedback and constructive comments which you have given learners over time, as discussed in the section on choosing portfolio items.

OWNERSHIP AND ETHICS: TO WHOM DO PORTFOLIOS BELONG?

Portfolios belong to adult learners, the people whose work and writing they contain. At the end of a cycle or a semester, adult learners should be able to take their portfolio with them if they choose. This is an ethical as well as a "nuts and bolts" issue, no different from the ethical considerations surrounding the ownership of any written material. A learner should never be forced to forfeit an original piece of work for program purposes.

Instructors whose programs require that portfolios - or specific items within them - be retained at the end of a cycle for data gathering and reporting purposes, need to be clear about the specific program policy for photocopying portfolios for program use. Instructors should make the policy clear to the learners and discuss it with them at the onset of a class. If need be, portfolios can be copied in their entirety.

Programs which need to retain sample writings by adult learners should have a standard release form, written in clear language, for this purpose. A release form gives the permission of a learner to use their writing in program reports, promotional materials or research articles. It should also include a line on which learners indicate how they want their name to appear, it at all. Choices include full name, first name only, initials, a fictitious name or no name. Learners and the instructor or preferably, a program administrator should sign and date the form. As an instructor, you should discuss these issues with your Program Coordinator, as policies may vary from program to program.

CLASSROOM PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION

It is ultimately you, the instructor who will need to create the systems that work best for you in order to implement portfolios in your classroom. The best planning begins with a look at the end goals or desired outcomes. The end goals of portfolios are:

-- to provide a rich portrait of the work, the progress, the learning and the thinking that has occurred for an individual over time;

-- to provide a clear idea of how well your teaching has met the needs of learners;

-- to do so in an organized and well planned way so that data can be collected from a class as a whole; and

-- to do the above while keeping the burden of extra time and work to a minimum.

With these goals in mind, some general guidelines for implementing portfolio use in the classroom are presented below.

PHYSICAL SPACE

Find or designate a place in your classroom for the portfolios, and for student work folders if you plan to use them. If you share a room with other teachers and classes, security and confidentiality are issues which you may need to discuss with a program administrator. A file drawer is preferable to library shelves in terms of privacy. In the worst case scenario of "instructor vehicle as travelling classroom", plastic milk crates or sturdy boxes will do. Keep in mind that portfolios, like any other program items containing learners' full names should be kept confidential, and should be stored in some secure way. In some programs, learners keep their portfolios with them, although this poses obvious problems when people leave a program.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Obtain whatever you choose to protect the portfolios: three ring binders, file folders or expandable accordion pleated folders; and labels if needed.

PROGRAM ITEMS

Have ready the "standard" items mandated by your program, as well as the ones you choose. These might include Individualized Education Plans, lesson plan forms, or Attendance forms for each learner to complete at the beginning or end of each class period. These can be stapled to the inside cover of a folder or included in the front of a binder or expandable legal folder. Attendance forms are strongly suggested because they require a learner to "check in" with their portfolio every class period.

PREPARING PORTFOLIOS FOR USE -- A GROUP ACTIVITY

Plan a group activity during the first or second class in which learners prepare and personalize their portfolios. This is a simple but significant ritual which will set the tone for a feeling of ownership of the portfolios. Learners should put their names on the portfolios, the attendance form, and any other items requiring their name and date. (Remind learners to date all items which they place in the portfolio.) You may wish to provide dividers for different skills areas which can be labelled by learners at this time. Explain the use of the release form and have learners sign them and return them to you.

You may also wish to have some colored markers on hand for this activity. Every group will have a few "artists" who may want to decorate or embellish their portfolio. Here again, a simple act can help create a feeling of ownership.

SCHEDULING

Set up a schedule for class time in which learners choose items for their portfolio, and in which they are reviewed and discussed one-on-one and/or in a whole group setting. Be very clear with learners about the schedule for portfolio-related activities; it will show that you are serious about them as a key element of the class, and that you will expect learners to take them seriously as well. Each student should have a copy of the schedule at the onset of the cycle.

Your schedule will depend on the length of the cycle. A suggested schedule for a twelve week cycle, crafted with time constraints in mind, follows. Please note that the schedule indicates time for learners to choose items each week. These choices should not be considered final, as learners will improve in their ability to reflect on and discriminate between items over the course of a cycle. It is recommended that, as the final review session draws near, learners be encouraged to think about the choices they have made over time, and adjust accordingly.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF PORTFOLIO-RELATED CLASS ACTIVITIES

PRIOR TO CLASS: Have all needed forms ready; obtain materials

WEEKLY: Check learner attendance sheets in portfolios against your Instructor's Class Attendance form.

WEEK 1 **CLASS DISCUSSION ON PORTFOLIOS**
explanation of workfolders
explanation of journals, if used
GROUP ACTIVITY TO ORGANIZE PORTFOLIOS

WEEK 2 **GROUP CRAFTS GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING ITEMS AND CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**
Remind learners to add week's items.

WEEK 3 Remind learners to add week's items.
QUICK PORTFOLIO REVIEW: check on completion of forms & items which have been added; remind learners of next week's review

WEEK 4 **FIRST PORTFOLIO REVIEW** with individual learners

WEEK 5 Remind learners to add week's items
ask for any questions about portfolios.

WEEK 6 **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION OF PORTFOLIOS**
Remind learners to add week's items
ask for any questions about portfolios.
Place instructor mid-cycle written evaluations of learner progress in portfolios.

WEEK 7 Remind learners to add week's items
ask for any questions about portfolios.
Remind learners of next week's review.

WEEK 8 **SECOND PORTFOLIO REVIEW** with individual learners

WEEK 9 Remind learners to add week's items
ask for any questions about portfolios.

WEEK 10 **LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION OF PORTFOLIOS**
Remind learners to add week's items.

WEEK 11 Announce Final Portfolio Review the following week; ask for questions, allow time for review.

WEEK 12 **FINAL INDIVIDUAL PORTFOLIO REVIEW ***
Place instructor written final evaluations of learner progress in portfolios.
Check to ensure all required items are in place.
Photocopy items necessary for program review.
Give portfolios to learners to retain, if desired.

* This may occur during Week 11, depending on final testing.

INITIAL CLASS DISCUSSION

Plan a discussion on portfolios with your class early on in the semester. Ensure that all learners have an understanding of:

- what portfolios are and what they can do to aid learning and to see progress
- the ownership policy for portfolios and the way your program will use them
- what they will gain from using them
- their participation in setting guidelines for choosing items and developing criteria for assessment of items
- the schedule for portfolio-related activities
- the use of work folders, and how they differ from portfolios
- the schedule for reviewing and evaluating portfolios
- the criteria for reviewing and evaluating portfolios (see section on Evaluating Portfolios)

PORTFOLIOS AND TIME CONSTRAINTS

Unfortunately, not every instructor who reads this handbook will be paid for the time it takes to do so - even if their program requires them to use portfolios. Understandably, the greatest resistance on the part of instructors to using portfolios stems from the fact that they require even more "unseen hours" invested in good teaching which are seldom remunerated in the form of paid preparation time. This is a valid concern because portfolios are a relatively "new" method for instruction and assessment in adult education, and it takes time to learn about how to use them well. It will also take extra time to implement them in your classroom.

The "politics of pay scales" lies within the realm of policy and advocacy, and not within the scope of this handbook. The issue is worthy of acknowledgement here, however, because it will probably affect the ways in which you approach this new technique. Adult education programs want to retain good teachers as much as they want to retain learners; the two go hand in hand. Quality teachers must continue to work with their program in advocating for increased staff development time, paid preparation time and other mechanisms which make it possible for part-time instructors to experiment with and implement new techniques such as portfolios.

Within the realm of your influence to immediately implement are ways to <u>minimize</u> the time it takes to work with and use portfolios. Some suggestions follow:

-- Make your initial schedule of portfolio related activities as realistic as possible. It is far more advisable to set modest expectations at the onset than to be forced to renege

on a more grandiose schedule during the class cycle. Learners will take the whole concept far more seriously if you follow through on the course of action established at the beginning of the cycle. You can, of course, always add additional activities as time goes on.

-- An initial investment of time spent thinking about how the contents of portfolios can be used to inform your teaching will pay off in the long run: time spent searching for or crafting your own forms like checklists, summary sheets and the like will save many hours at the end of a cycle in trying to "make sense" of the information you have.

-- Many adult education instructors use the last five or ten minutes of class time for garnering learner feedback about that particular session. This time can serve the dual purpose of discussing portfolios with the whole group, or allowing learners time to choose items from the week's work to include in the portfolios, without sacrificing additional instruction time.

Lastly, if, as you skimmed the sample schedule above, you found yourself thinking: "That's a big percentage of class time to devote to an assessment tool!", you are absolutely correct. However, as this handbook has hopefully shown, portfolios are not solely <u>assessment</u> tools. If taken seriously and implemented well, they are also a key element of instruction itself, an effective teaching tool for encouraging metacognition in adult learners. Seen in this light, the amount of time devoted to portfolios in the schedule above is not a huge percentage of total class time, but a reasonable amount of time to devote to something which can only enhance your teaching and increase the success, satisfaction and retention of adult learners.

EVALUATING PORTFOLIOS

> *"The benefits of portfolios lie as much in the discussions they generate among teachers - and between teachers and students - as in the wealth of information they provide."*
>
> *Murphy & Smith, "Talking About Portfolios", The Quarterly, Summer 1990.*

When thinking about evaluating portfolios, keep the following in mind:

1. The evaluation of portfolio items should not be viewed as a one-time activity at the end of a cycle; it should be an ongoing activity in your classes, as the sample schedule illustrated.

2. Evaluation of portfolios should be undertaken by all parties involved in learning and teaching: adult learners, instructors and adult education programs.

3. The methods and criteria used for evaluating portfolios will differ for each of the groups evaluating them. They should be generated with learners and agreed upon at the beginning of a cycle.

This section will describe different methods of portfolio evaluation or assessment, and will include examples of criteria used for each, gleaned from material that has been developed in practice from programs around the country. A wide range of guidelines is presented here so that you may choose and adapt those most meaningful and helpful for your particular situation.

LEARNER SELF-REFLECTION ON PORTFOLIO ITEMS AND PORTFOLIOS

The process of assisting learners to evaluate their portfolios can best be thought of in terms of instructor-as-facilitator of a discussion on specific items or a portfolio as a whole. As guide or coach, you are encouraging learners to reflect on their own progress, "products", learning and thinking. You are challenging them in a non-threatening way to think critically. This approach also aids you in evaluating learners' work through an in-depth understanding of why learners chose specific items and what, in their opinion, these items reveal about their progress.

It is worth repeating here that it is crucial for learners to participate in generating the criteria and guidelines for portfolio evaluation so that they can learn from these and prepare for

evaluation discussions. Many sample questions follow; however as stated earlier, an initial class discussion to create the guidelines with learners is far more motivating than handing learners a long list of questions which you have already prepared. These sample questions can serve as a checklist for class discussion or as a guide to stimulate your thinking.

1. Evaluating specific entries or items

The following questions are for use by instructors and learners meeting one-on one to evaluate specific portfolio items during the course of a cycle and at its end. Some of these may be given to students as written questions prior to a meeting on portfolios. You may also choose to ask learners to write their responses to some of these questions prior to meeting with them.

Analysis of Skills and Processes

-- What makes this your best piece?
-- How did you go about (writing, solving, creating) it?
-- What problems did you encounter? How did you solve them?
-- What makes your most effective piece different from your least effective piece?
-- What goals did you set for yourself this month? How did you accomplish them? Which should we carry over for next month? Are there new ones you want to add?
-- Why did you select this piece of work?
-- What was particularly important to you during the process of creating this work?
-- If you could work further on this piece, what would you do?
-- What do you want me (the tutor/teacher) to look for when I evaluate this work?
-- How does this relate to what you have learned before?
-- What grade would you put on this paper? Why?
-- Of the work we've done recently, which part do you feel most confident about?
-- What is still unclear?

Adapted from "Using Portfolios Workshop"
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1992

2. Evaluating journal entries in portfolios

The following is a list of questions to aid learners in evaluating journal entries and journals as a whole. Many of these questions apply to portfolios, and to specific journal entries which learners have chosen for their portfolios.

-- What do you notice when you read through your journal?
-- What changes do you notice (in what you worked on, what you wrote, how you wrote or anything else)?

Now, take a step back from the journals and think more generally about the class and what you've learned.

-- Were there things you wanted to achieve and didn't? If that happened, why do you think it happened?
-- What have you learned? This might be learning goals that you met or things you learned that weren't even originally goals.
-- Do you notice any changes in yourself, in how you feel or how you act, in and out of class?
-- What are your plans for next semester?

Germantown Women's Educational Project
Self-Evaluation, December 1992

3. Evaluating reading and writing processes in one-on-one settings (adult learner and instructor or tutor)

The following forms are used by Literacy Volunteers of new York City (LVNYC). Students are asked to choose a sample of their reading or writing from past months and then discuss these questions with their tutors in relation to that sample. They can write their responses or dictate to their tutors. The questions are spaced widely apart, with a lot of room for writing the answers.

Writing Information Sheet

1. Why did you choose this sample for your portfolio?
2. Why did you decide to write this in the first place?
3. What kinds of things did you do to write this the way you did?
   Try to describe all the steps you took to create it.
4. What do you think about the way it came out? Why? Did you do anything special with it?
5. Have you made progress? How do you know?
6. What would you like to work on next?

Reading Information Sheet

Name of what you read:
Author:
Description of what it was:

1. Why did you choose this sample for your portfolio?
2. Why did you decide to read this sample?
3. What kinds of things did you do to understand what you read?
4. What did reading it mean for you? Why was reading it important for you? Did you share it with someone else?
5. Have you made progress? How do you know?
6. What would you like to work on next?

4. Evaluating reading and writing abilities in a small group setting

The following sets of questions were devised to help facilitate small group discussion of learner progress in reading and writing. Many of the questions are helpful for reviewing portfolio items reflecting reading and writing skills.

Reading

-- When I think about how my ability to read a book has changed I've noticed:
-- Other ways I've changed as a reader that let me know I'm improving are:
-- Now I can read:
-- I feel better about my reading because:

Writing

-- When I think about what I used to do when I write compared to what I do now, I can see that:
-- When I edit something I have written:
-- I know I feel better about my writing because:
-- Now I can:
-- Other things that let me know I am improving:

Marilyn Collins' Center at Literacy Volunteers of New York City

5. Evaluating a portfolio as a whole

The next two sets of questions are for use by instructors and learners in evaluating a portfolio as a complete body of work during the course of a class and at its end.

How Skills and Processes Have Changed Over Time

-- How is your work at the end of the month/year different from your work at the beginning?
-- Has the way you planned work changed over time? If so, how?
-- How do these changes affect the way you think about your future goals for learning or work?

Affective and Other Areas

-- Does your work show that you are persistent (self-confident, motivated, etc.)? How?
-- Has your persistence (motivation, self-confidence, etc.) changed since the beginning (of the month/ year)? How?

-- What activity do you enjoy most (least)? Why?
-- What type of assignments do you enjoy most (least)? Why?
-- What do you find most challenging? Why?
-- Do you like working with others on projects? Why/why not?
-- What are the ways you find working with others useful? Not useful?

Adapted from "Using Portfolios Workshop"
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1992

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATION OF LEARNER PORTFOLIOS

In addition to acting as guide and facilitator of portfolio assessment with learners, your role in evaluating portfolios will largely depend on the requirements of your program and your own teaching style. Before a cycle begins, think about the methods you'll use to evaluate portfolios. Whether you choose to create checklists based on some of the questions below, or your program has forms designed for this purpose, you will need to make them work for you in as time efficient a manner as possible.

Reporting requirements vary widely among programs; the key is to know what they are in advance so that you can guide the process of gathering information in your classroom efficiently. It is a waste of time to gather voluminous amounts of information that will never be used. The methods you use to evaluate portfolios should be driven by your understanding of *what* your program requires for assessment, *how* the information will be used, and the information that you as an instructor want to glean from them.

Your notes from evaluation discussions with learners and/or their written responses to evaluation questions should be included in final portfolios. In some cases, it might be necessary to write a brief summary of key points to give to learners and to include in portfolios. If you are teaching in a program in which adult learners return to take other classes or continue in their studies, a brief summary of the work of each learner will also be helpful to your program and to the next instructors who will encounter those learners. In some programs, these summaries will be used, often together with MAPP/CASAS scores, to determine placement for a learner's next class.

One example of the scoring or instructor evaluation of learner portfolios follows. As you read, think about the criteria that you and your learners would find important for portfolio review.

Sample Scoring of a Portfolio

Level 4 (top level)

Portfolio is exciting to look through. Shows not only solid understanding and execution of the assignments but also shows evidence of ability to think for self in creative or imaginative way. This creativity and independent thought may be reflected in:

- -- Unusual approaches or solutions to problems.
- -- Unusual capacity for self-assessment and growth as evidenced by drafts, learner comments and revised work.
- -- Ability to take risks and view new problems or assignments as challenges rather than obstacles.

Work reflects high ability to organize and analyze.
Shows evidence of problem solving skills.
Raises good questions about nature of problem and analysis.
Good variety of work demonstrated.

Level 3

- -- Shows solid understanding and execution of work.
- -- Shows good ability to organize and explain work.
- -- Good variety of work.
- -- Factors most likely to be missing are enthusiasm, self -assessment, risk-taking and independent thinking/analysis.

Level 2

- -- Shows adequate understanding and execution of assignments.
- -- Shows limited variety of work and limited number of strategies used.
- -- Very little explanation of work.
- -- Factors most likely to be missing are overall effort and self-assessment.

Level 1

- -- Shows very little evidence of thinking or effort.
- -- Work may be disorganized or incomplete.
- -- Work may reflect lack of understanding about subject as well as weak skills.

Compiled from Priestly, M. (1982), Stenmark, Jean Kerr, Editor (1991), and Wiggins, Grant as cited in "Tradewinds in Work Based Learning", Diana Cecala, Editor, October, 1993.

It should go without saying that any verbal or written critique of portfolios should be conducted with great care and sensitivity. Comments about areas of improvement should be stated in a positive manner and should be matched with positive reinforcement about areas of strengths. Like all other aspects of teaching, portfolio reviews are part of a process of encouraging and motivating learners. Any signs of improvement, however small, may reflect growth and hard work on the part of the learner.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT EXPECTATIONS

All good things take time. As you begin to implement portfolio assessment for the first time, make sure that your expectations of yourself and your students are realistic. It will take time and experience and experimentation to develop the whole portfolio assessment process, and to tailor it to meet your specific situation. Approach the first class in which you implement portfolios as an experiment: be open and flexible to changing the process as you learn from it. After all, you will be asking learners to do the same.

We come full circle here, back to the discussion of the emotional baggage which learners often bring to the adult education classroom. Learners may be resistant to the notion of being their own yardstick because it is such a radical departure from their experience in formal education. Have patience with them; critical thinking skills do not spring into action overnight. One of the greatest attributes of a true teacher is to regard one's self as a student, listening always to those who will teach you. It is also the key to making portfolio assessment a motivating, empowering force for your adult learners, and a way to improve your own thinking about learning.

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APPENDIX I

Sample Learner Interview Form
Used by the Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program
A Workplace Education Program
Administered by Essex Community College

(Note: Spaces between lines for written responses have been eliminated here.)

I. PERSONAL DATA

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Work number:
4. Occupation
5. Name of Employer and Location:

II. EDUCATIONAL DATA

1. What was school like for you?
2. What were your strengths as a student?
3. What were your weaknesses as a student?
4. As a learner, what strengths do you see in yourself now that you did not have before?
5. As a learner, are there any problems or barriers (e.g. family conflicts, schedule conflicts, daycare problems) that might make it difficult to come to class and do your work regularly?

III. GOALS

1. Why did you enroll in this class?

2. What are your goals for this class?

   -Personal

   -Educational

   -Workbased

IV. ON THE JOB WORK

1. What are the main tasks you perform on the job?

2. What kind of reading do you do on your job (forms, charts, manuals, memos, documents)?

3. What kind of math do you use on your job (measurement, estimation, calculation, graphing/plotting)?

4. What kind of verbal communication do you use on your job with supervisor, with coworkers, with customers, with public?

5. Would you like to improve your verbal communication skills?

6. Do you have to take any certification tests? Explain.

7. What do you find most difficult about your job?

APPENDIX II

Sample Learning Style Survey
Used by the Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program
A Workplace Education Program
Administered by Essex Community College

NAME:_____ **DATE:**_____

LEARNING STYLES SURVEY

BY: Philip John Young Ed. D.
Licensed Psychologist
Certified School Psychologist II

DIRECTIONS: Circle the word to the left that best describes you as a learner.

I learn best when:

Yes No 1. touching and manipulating what is to be learned

Yes No 2. seeing how something is to be done

Yes No 3. listening to how something is to be done

Yes No 4. touching and feeling what is to be learned while I am being shown

Yes No 5. touching and feeling what is to be learned while it is being explained

Yes No 6. seeing how it is done while I do it

Yes No 7. seeing how it is done while someone talks about how to do it

Yes No 8. someone tells me how to do it while I do it

Yes No 9. someone tells me how to do it while I watch

Yes No 10. people give either verbal or visual directions/instructions which are lengthy, I have difficulty paying attention

Yes No 11. I like making things with my hands

Yes No 12. I read I use my finger or a marker

LEARNING STYLES SURVEY (page 2)

Yes No 13. a person gives long verbal directions or instructions, I have difficulty paying attention

Yes No 14. I like to look at things-magazines, works of art, window shop, etc.

Yes No 15. I read, I do so silently.

Yes No 16. people give long visual demonstrations or instructions of how to do something, I have difficulty paying attention

Yes No 17. I read, I move my lips

Yes No 18. I like listening to tapes, music, etc.

When learning a new academic skill, I like:

Yes No 19. studying/working alone after the teacher has given very specific directions about what is to be done and/or how to do it

Yes No 20. studying/working alone and prefer that the teacher lets me go about the assignment in a way I would like

Yes No 21. the teacher to provide one-on one instruction

Yes No 22. little teacher involvement and prefer to read the material, answer the questions and/or fill in the blanks, and correct my own work so I can evaluate how I did.

Yes No 23. the instructor to give very specific directions about what is to be learned and how to go about it, and then give me an opportunity to do it with a fellow student

Yes No 24. the teacher to give me an assignment and then give me an opportunity to decide how to go about it with another student

Yes No 25. the instructor to give me specific directions about what is to be learned and how to go about learning it, and then give me an opportunity to do the assignment with a small group of students.

Yes No 26. the teacher to give me the assignment and then give me an opportunity to decide how to do it with a small group of students.

LEARNING STYLES
SURVEY PROFILE ANSWER KEY
BY: Philip John Young, Ed.D.
Licensed Psychologist
Certified School Psychologist II

K	V	A	KV	KA	VK	VA	AK	AV	IS	IU	DS	DU	DSP	DUSP	DSC	DUSC
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
4	6	8														
5	7	9														
10	13	16														
11	14	17														
12	15	18														

CODE:
K - Kinesthetic
V - Visual
A - Auditory
I - Independent
S - Structured
US - Unstructured
D - Dependent
P - Peer
C - Cooperative

APPENDIX III

Sample Individualized Education Plan
Used by the Maryland Hospital Skills Enhancement Program
A Workplace Education Program
Administered by Essex Community College

TEST SCORES

Date	*Form*	*Raw Score*	*%tile*	*Placement*
ABLE				
OTHER SCORES				

EDUCATION BACKGROUND

1-6: _____

_____

7-12: _____

_____

Other: _____

WORK HISTORY

Job Title	*Date*	*Duties/Skills*

SELF-ASSESSMENT

STRENGTHS _____

_____

_____

AREAS WHICH NEED IMPROVEMENT _____

_____

_____

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

LONG TERM _____

_____

_____

_____

SHORT TERM _____

_____

_____

_____

IMMEDIATE STEPS _____

_____

_____

_____

I understand that the information contained on this form is strictly confidential and available only to the employee and to Essex Community College personnel.

Employee's Signature _____ Counselor's Signature _____

MHSEP APPENDIX IV
INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLAN

DATE	GOAL	SKILL REQUIRED	APPL. TO JOB	ACTIVITY	ASSESSMENT/DAT

MHSEP APPENDIX V
STUDENT ATTENDANCE LOG

NAME _____ **Date of Enrollment** _____

DIRECTIONS:

* **Sign your name and write the date on a new line each day you are in class.**

1.	_____	**21.**	_____
2.	_____	**22.**	_____
3.	_____	**23.**	_____
4.	_____	**24.**	_____
5.	_____	**25.**	_____
6.	_____	**26.**	_____
7.	_____	**27.**	_____
8.	_____	**28.**	_____
9.	_____	**29.**	_____
10.	_____	**30.**	_____
11.	_____	**31.**	_____
12.	_____	**32.**	_____
13.	_____	**33.**	_____
14.	_____	**34.**	_____
15.	_____	**35.**	_____
16.	_____	**36.**	_____
17.	_____	**37.**	_____
18.	_____	**38.**	_____
19.	_____	**39.**	_____
20.	_____	**40.**	_____

****Tell Your Teacher When You Have Signed All 40 Lines.**

APPENDIX VI

NAME:_____ **CLASS**_____ **DATE:**_____

MARYLAND HOSPITAL SKILL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
MOTIVATION MONITOR

CIRCLE BEST ANSWER. DO NOT THINK TOO LONG ABOUT THEM.

1. When I think of my being in this class I feel
   A. Happy
   B. Satisfied
   C. A little nervous
   D. Hesitant

2. In the next few months, I picture myself
   A. Succeeding quickly through the work
   B. Making errors but not giving up
   C. Really having to work hard to succeed
   D. Scared of all the new experiences ahead of me

3. When I recall my past learning experiences I feel
   A. Good about my past performance as a student
   B. About average in my performance
   C. A little ashamed that I didn't put forth more effort
   D. That I have a lot to overcome in order to do well

4. The reactions of my supervisor/coworkers to my joining this program can be BEST described as
   A. Positive and supportive
   B. Hopeful that I will do well
   C. Doubtful that I will stick with this
   D. Negative and critical

5. The last time I took a test I felt
   A. Challenged
   B. A little nervous but capable
   C. Very nervous
   D. Sick to my stomach

6. On a scale of 1 to 4 (4 is the highest), I would rate my motivation and enthusiasm for this program as_____.

7. When I think of the future I see myself as
   A. Successful and self-directed
   B. Working hard and succeeding
   C. Working hard to hold on to this job
   D. Wondering about my future

Motivation Monitor (page 2)

8. When I feel discouraged I have a tendency to
   A. Use humor, call my friends or have some fun
   B. Keep on until it passes
   C. Withdraw for a short time until it passes
   D. Give up until I get lucky

9. I think that HOPE is
   A. Essential
   B. Important
   C. Nice but not a necessity
   D. What I might like to have

10. On a scale of 1 to 4 (1 is the lowest), I would rate my ability to excel as_____.

Comments: